

Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw
November 30, 2012

A couple weeks ago, Chief Gagnon, Lt. Ouellet and I attended the AAA Traffic Safety Awards Luncheon in Andover representing our police department. We proudly accepted three awards from AAA, including the Gold Award to the department for traffic safety efforts in 2011. On behalf of Chief Gagnon and the staff at the Amesbury Police Department, I would like to express our thanks to AAA for their recognition and continued support of our programs. I would also like to thank the many volunteers and community members who help to make our community a safer and better place. It takes combination of public and police work to reach the goal of safer streets and it's certainly not always easy. Although not every accident can be prevented, steps are taken to combine enforcement and education to reduce the factors that contribute to a crash.

I'd also like to humbly say thank you to AAA for naming me a "Traffic Safety Hero." The recognition was unexpected but certainly appreciated. AAA considered the various safety programs being conducted in our community and the outreach we do. Traffic safety is not always about meeting a quota of citations, sometimes an appearance at a community event, a presentation at the Senior Center, annual school safety talks and membership in an organization like the Chamber of Commerce helps to identify a traffic concern and prevent an accident. I would especially like to recognize and thank *The Amesbury News* for their continued support and assistance. I know I've mentioned it before but their role in helping to make Amesbury safer is enormous. In fact, AAA cited "Watchwords" as a major factor for my award. Since June of 1996, the column has appeared in the paper, covering a variety of traffic safety, crime prevention tips and community news. Without the support of *The Amesbury News*, there's no way I'd be able to deliver so much material to such a large audience. As we move ahead in the technology world, I'm even able to reach the world-wide-web now, thanks to the online feature.

In 2013, AAA will be undertaking a number of initiatives to promote traffic safety and we are pleased to be working with the staff. This week, as the holiday season is now underway, I thought I'd cover "The 3 Ds of Dangerous Driving." As the season moves along and we face the challenges of winter driving, holiday parties and a hectic schedule, motorists need to be aware of three dangers, which seem to be at the cause of many crashes.

- **DRUNK DRIVING** Despite tougher laws, civil liability and directed police patrols, impaired driving continues to be a significant social problem. In fact, a mobilization in December called, "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" will combine the resources of police agencies across the nation to target drunk drivers. It's not worth the risk of hurting or killing someone in a crash, if you've been drinking, let someone else do the driving.
- **DISTRACTED DRIVING** We have all been a witness to someone texting, reading the paper, playing with the radio or doing something to draw attention away from their focus of the roadway. It takes a tremendous amount of multi-tasking to drive an automobile and

being distracted, even for just a moment, can contribute to a crash. Other distractions include unrestrained pets, ice on the windshield and talking on a cell phone; your first priority is to drive safely and pay attention. Don't allow distractions to lead to a crash; it could also lead to a citation and an insurance surcharge.

- **DROWSY DRIVING** Drowsy driving is becoming a serious problem and AAA will be launching a new initiative in 2013 to call attention to it. Driving when you are tired can produce the same effects and consequences of drunk driving. If you find your eyelids are drooping, take a break and get off the road. Stopping for about 10 or 15 minutes, getting out and walking around the car and a cup of coffee will be refreshing.

In closing, the annual winter parking ban begins on December 1st, so make sure vehicles are not parked on City streets or in Municipal Parking Lots between 1:00 and 5:00 AM. Violators are subject to a parking violation and towing at their own expense. The ban is effective, regardless of weather conditions, until April 1, 2013 to facilitate the snow removal operations of the DPW. Questions about the ban may be directed to the on-duty supervisor at the Police Station, 978-388-1217. In the event the Mayor declares a Snow Emergency, vehicles cannot be left on the street, regardless of the time.